

experiments have been conducted in the fields of Earth science, biology, fluids, materials sciences, and astronomy;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has executed the launch and service of the Hubble Space Telescope, enabling groundbreaking and breathtaking views of the universe outside of our solar system;

Whereas the space shuttles have docked to 2 different space stations, with 9 missions to Mir, the space station of the Government of Russia, and 37 missions to the International Space Station;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has been essential to the on-orbit assembly of the International Space Station and vital to ensuring the continued viability and support of the International Space Station;

Whereas the space shuttles have landed at the Kennedy Space Center 77 times, at Edwards Air Force Base 54 times, and at the White Sands Test Facility once;

Whereas the launch configuration of the entire Space Transportation System contains approximately 2,500,000 moving parts and, at lift-off, weighs approximately 4,500,000 pounds; and

Whereas the space shuttles can travel around the Earth at a speed of approximately 17,500 miles per hour: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on reaching the historic milestone of the 135th and final flight of the Space Transportation System;

(2) honors the men and women of the Space Shuttle Program, who worked tirelessly to design, build, and operate the Space Transportation System, in order to promote science, exploration, and international cooperation;

(3) remembers the 14 crewmembers lost during the space shuttle Challenger accident, which occurred on January 28, 1986, and the space shuttle Columbia accident, which occurred on February 1, 2003;

(4) notes the diligence in applying the lessons learned through the Challenger and Columbia tragedies to honor the 14 crewmembers we lost and enhance the safety of the crewmembers that followed;

(5) recognizes that the Space Shuttle Program has inspired generations of children to become engineers, scientists, and explorers, which has led to maintaining the precedent of leadership in human space exploration set by the United States during the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions; and

(6) acknowledges that the Space Shuttle Program has, through its technological advancements and scientific research, driven innovation in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to benefit the people of the United States and all of humankind.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

#### CONGRESSIONAL RETIREMENT AGE ACT

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the senior Senator from Florida about Social Security. In my State—and it is not much different in Rhode Island, the State of the Presiding Officer—the average Social Security benefit is \$14,000 a year. A huge percent—I think about half—of Social Security beneficiaries in Ohio rely on Social Security for more than half of their income.

When I hear proposals here, which Senator NELSON also was speaking against, to make significant cuts to seniors who are getting \$1,000 a month from Social Security and letting off hedge fund managers who are paying significantly lower tax rates than most people in the middle class—that the sacrifice is aimed toward the middle class and aimed toward seniors and not spread more evenly among people who are the most privileged of society—it bothers me, as it does, I know, the Presiding Officer.

I rise today about a similar issue, about a Social Security issue also, calling on my colleagues in the Senate and in the House of Representatives to practice what we preach.

Presently, the Congress and the White House are working to find agreement on ways to balance the budget, as we should. I was part of the effort in the 1990s. During the Clinton years we balanced the Federal budget. In fact, during those 8 years, we took a terrible deficit and high unemployment, and even though taxes for upper income people were raised to 39 percent, we saw 21 million private sector jobs created, we saw incomes going up, and we saw that President Clinton left office with the highest budget surplus in American history.

We saw the policies of the next 8 years and what they did to our country: tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation of Wall Street, bad trade agreements, a giveaway to the drug and insurance companies, and two unpaid-for wars and where that got us to this budget situation—exacerbated by this recession in the last 3 years. So we clearly need to move forward in balancing the budget.

Some Washington politicians want to balance the budget by cutting the Social safety net upon which millions of hard-working Americans rely. I oppose those efforts.

In a time of fiscal belt-tightening, Members of Congress should also share the burden of reducing that deficit. That is why I have introduced the Congressional Retirement Age Act of 2011.

The bill is simple. As Congress and the White House seek an agreement on a deficit reduction package, Members of Congress cannot permit themselves to receive benefits denied to ordinary working Americans.

While the wealth of Members of Congress varies, there is no doubt we receive a healthy salary and benefits compared to millions of American families who do not.

Members of Congress also have an added benefit. We can access our Federal retirement benefits early, whether we serve as few as 5 or as many as 25 years. Millions of seniors—who have worked their lives in factories or have worked their lives in construction or have worked their lives walking the floor of retail outlets, department stores or diners—millions of seniors cannot do the same. For too many Americans, Social Security has become

their retirement plan, as pensions disappear and 401(k)s plummet.

All Members of Congress are able to collect their pensions at any time—starting at age 50—if they have served 25 years. Most have not by the age of 50, obviously, but once they have served 25 years, they can receive full pensions. If they have served as few as 5 years, they can collect their pensions beginning at age 62.

So with 25 years of congressional service, Members of Congress can receive pensions immediately upon retirement. If they have served 5 years, they can receive a pension—not a large one at that point but a pretty decent pension—at age 62.

But what about a Youngstown steelworker, what about a Columbus store clerk, what about a Cincinnati nurse, what about a Toledo sheet metal worker, what about an Akron worker in a rubber plant? Do they get that option? Of course not. They have to wait until age 65, or age 62 at a discounted amount, to receive retirement benefits.

No longer should any Congressman, no longer should any Congresswoman, no longer should any Senator be treated differently from other Americans. That is what the Congressional Retirement Age Act of 2011 would ensure.

This bill would amend the Federal Employees Retirement System and the Civil Service Retirement System to directly tie current and future Members of Congress' access to their Federal retirement benefits to the Social Security retirement age.

It is that simple and it is bipartisan. Senator McCASKILL of Missouri, a Democrat, Senator JOHNSON of South Dakota, a Democrat, are cosponsors. The House companion, introduced by Representative BOBBY SCHILLING of Illinois, a Republican, has seven Republican cosponsors.

This idea is endorsed by the conservative National Taxpayers Union, that calls it “one of the few serious attempts to reform Congressional pensions in recent memory.” I do not agree with the National Taxpayers Union on that many issues; they are too willing to cut benefits for the middle class, in my view. But together, on this issue, we share the belief that Members of Congress should be treated as any other citizen. There is no reason that the benefits of being a Member of Congress should be more generous than being a member of the middle class.

According to reports, 13 sitting Senators and 31 Members of the House of Representatives today have accrued annual pensions worth at last \$50,000, if they were to retire today. Meanwhile, American workers age 65 or older receive a median private pension payment of about \$8,000 a year.

Elected officials do not, frankly—I think you look around this body and you know that most House Members and Senators, at least a number of them, simply do not know enough people who work in construction, who work in a retail store, who work at a

diner, who work at a manufacturing plant, who work in a hotel cleaning rooms, who stand up all day as a cosmetologist or as a barber, working in jobs where their bodies simply cannot work until the age of 70.

Members of Congress, dressing like this and doing what we do, can often work—obviously, if the voters say so—can, obviously, work into our 70s. It is not that hard for most of us. But while we go to work in a suit and tie, tens of millions of American workers work in factories and mines and fields and diners and hotels and their bodies simply cannot work until the age of 70.

So when I hear my colleagues say we should raise the Social Security retirement age, I think of people working in the service industry, I think of people doing demanding work in agriculture and on shop floors and in construction and hairdressers, and all that.

Why should they wait longer for their retirement security—albeit it is too small to begin with in many cases; it is minimal, often, at best—but why should they wait longer for their retirement security than Members of Congress?

So for those who think about raising the retirement age for Social Security, think about raising the retirement age for ourselves. There is simply no reason we, as Members of Congress—no matter how many years of service—

should be able to retire at full pension before Social Security beneficiaries in this country.

Why should Members of Congress be treated better than a steelworker or a store clerk or a nurse or a hotel worker?

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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#### ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, JULY 14, 2011

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 14; that following the prayer and the pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following any leader remarks, the Senate proceed to a period of morning business for 1 hour with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with

the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the second half; that following morning business, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2055, the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies appropriations bill post-cloture; further that all time during adjournment, morning business and recess count postcloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 2055.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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#### PROGRAM

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. We hope to get an agreement to begin consideration of the Military Construction appropriations bill early tomorrow.

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#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:45 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, July 14, 2011, at 9:30 a.m.